

PUMPKIN SEEDS

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Nutrition and Health...

Seeds are rich in minerals, calories and protein. Pumpkin seeds are a concentrated source of iron, zinc and magnesium and contain omega 6 and omega 3 fats. They are also high in fiber. Pumpkin seeds have a natural protective coating—called the hull. The hulls are edible, but can be tough to chew.

Both hulled and unhulled roasted seeds are enjoyed as a snack food. Pumpkin seeds add a great crunch to salads and may be sprinkled on rice dishes or sautéed vegetables. Grind the pumpkin seeds and add to salad dressings, casseroles or baked goods.

Selection...

Pumpkin seeds are available in natural food sections of the grocery store. Also called pepitas, these edible seeds are a medium-dark green color (white shell has been removed). Pepitas are sold salted, roasted, raw and with or without hulls. Choose seeds that look healthy and firm, not wilted or shriveled. Smell to check that seeds are not rancid or musty.

To harvest seeds yourself, select firm, mature pumpkins or squash that are free of blemishes. Cut the pumpkin in half and scoop out the seeds from the center cavity. Loosen the seeds from surrounding fibers using your fingers or wiping with a paper towel. Yellow-white hulls hold the flat green seed. Discard moldy or darkened seeds. Varieties that have “hull-less” seeds are often preferred, but any seed is edible. If the shell is very thick and heavy, the hull will need to be removed.

Storage...

Store dried or roasted seeds in an airtight container in the refrigerator. If they will be kept longer than 10 to 14 days, place in the freezer.

Preparation...

Drying seeds and roasting seeds are two different processes. Pumpkin seeds may be dried or boiled before

roasting—or roasted fresh. To prepare the seeds for use, separate the fiber from the pumpkin seed. Place the seeds in a colander and rinse thoroughly with water.

Methods...

Drying—Carefully wash pumpkin seeds to remove clingy pumpkin fibers. Pumpkin seeds can be dried in the sun for 6 hours or longer, in a dehydrator at 115° to 120° F for 1 to 2 hours or in an oven on warm for 3 to 4 hours. Stir them frequently to avoid scorching.

Roasting Dried Seeds—Take dried pumpkin seeds, toss with a little oil, salt (if preferred) and roast in a preheated oven at 250°F for 10 to 15 minutes.

Boiling and Roasting—In a saucepan bring salted water (2 tablespoons salt to 1 quart water) to a boil. Add rinsed seeds, boil 30 minutes. Drain seeds and dry them on absorbent paper. Place seeds on a shallow pan. Roast in a 300° F oven for 30 to 40 minutes or until golden brown. Stir every 10 minutes.

Roasting in Microwave—Pat 1 cup rinsed pumpkin seeds dry with a paper towel. Place 2 tablespoons butter in a microwave-safe dish. Melt on high 30 seconds. Spread seeds in single layer in dish. Microwave on high 7 to 8 minutes, stirring every 2 minutes. Sprinkle with salt or other seasonings.

De-hulling Seeds—Hulls can be removed from the seeds after boiling, drying or roasting. Hulls will slip off after seeds have been boiled or may be cracked and separated from the seed after drying or roasting. It is a time-consuming process. Hull-less seeds do not have a thick hull.

Toasting Hulled Seeds—Heat a skillet over medium-low heat. Add the seeds. Move the skillet back and forth over the heat or stir constantly. When the seeds begin to pop and have a nutty aroma, they are ready. Salt and enjoy.

Seasoning Options...

Try adding a dash of garlic powder, curry powder or Cajun seasoning to roasted pumpkin seeds.